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Released By: Jose Arballo Jr.  
Public Information Specialist  
Phone: 951-358-5599 Cell: 951-712-3705  
[jarballo@rivcocha.org](mailto:jarballo@rivcocha.org)

Contact: Tonya Geiger, RN, PHN, MSN  
Branch Chief Immunizations  
Phone: 951-358-7125  
FAX: 951-358-7912

### **Officials urge Riverside County residents to get flu vaccination**

While the flu season has started in earnest in some portions of the country, Riverside County health officials say the number of influenza cases locally is low but they are encouraging residents to get a flu shot as soon as possible.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced last week that the number of influenza cases in several southern states jumped dramatically recently and it was an early start for the flu season, which normally peaks later. There have been no flu-related deaths in California and Riverside County officials say influenza activity is at or below normal in the region, but it is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months. They stressed that getting vaccinated is one of the best ways of avoiding the flu.

“The flu shot is one of the most effective public health measures we have. It only takes a few moments but can be so beneficial to one’s health,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County interim public health officer. “There are so many places where shots can be obtained that access to the vaccine should not be an issue.”

The vaccine that has been widely distributed appears to be a match for the influenza strain that health officials are seeing, meaning the flu shot should be effective.

Tens of thousands of flu shots are given each year in Riverside County and more than 112 million people have been vaccinated nationally so far, according to the CDC. Nationally, thousands of people die each year during the flu season and hundreds of thousands are hospitalized.

Annual flu shots are recommended for everyone over the age of 6 months, but especially important for:

- Pregnant women;
- Children younger than 5;
- People 50 and older;
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions;
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term facilities;
- Health care workers, household contacts and home caregivers for high risk individuals

Flu clinics are scheduled at the county’s 10 Family Care Centers. Flu clinic hours are 8 – 11:30 a.m. and 1 – 4 p.m. For clinics locations, call 800-720-9553 or visit [www.rivco-familycarecenters.org/flu.htm](http://www.rivco-familycarecenters.org/flu.htm)